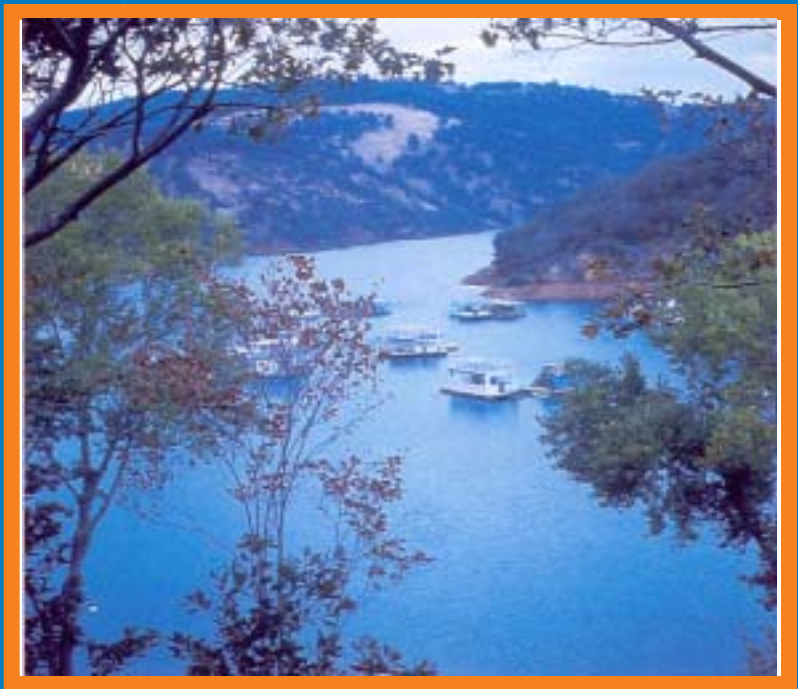




safe boating hints on

lakes & reservoirs



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
THE RESOURCES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF BOATING AND WATERWAYS

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Lakes and Reservoirs

Reservoirs offer excellent recreational opportunities for boating, water-skiing, fishing and related water activities. Although boating conditions on reservoirs vary only slightly from other inland waters, some have special characteristics which may affect your safe enjoyment of them.

Dams

Water areas near dams, spillways or glory holes are sometimes dangerous because of strong currents. These areas are not always marked by buoys, log booms or other devices. Boat operators should avoid these areas or exercise special precautions.



Glory hole at Lake Berryessa. This large vertical opening in the reservoir functions as a spillway in the dam and is extremely hazardous during periods of high water. Glory holes are usually located upstream of a dam, and the diameter of the opening can be large enough to entrap boats. (Photographs courtesy of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation)

Water Level Fluctuation

During times of release or intake, water levels may vary as much as four or five feet per day. Rocks, stumps and islands often appear, disappear or lie just below the surface as the water level changes.

In some reservoirs, submerged trees are left in certain areas, particularly within side canyons, to provide a breeding ground for fish. Because of the constant changes in water level, such hazards are usually not marked. Boaters should familiarize themselves with the hazards in these areas and travel at reduced speed to protect propellers and hulls from damage. Extra shear pins should always be carried.

Water Depths

Water depths may be estimated by observing the shoreline. Flat shorelines usually indicate shallows. Steep shores usually indicate deeper water. Anchoring in deep water may be difficult or impossible due to the length of line required.

Launching Ramps

During periods of low water the offshore ends of paved launching ramps may not extend far enough into the water to afford automobile wheel traction. It is advisable to check ramps before backing down to launch.

Debris

Following winter storms and during spring runoff, a considerable amount of debris may accumulate in a reservoir. Floating garbage or trash can also cause problems. Under such conditions boat operators should maintain a constant lookout and travel at reduced speed. Maneuvers to avoid debris should be made with due regard for your passengers and other boats.


Warning and Regulation Markers

Signs are often placed on shore or on buoys in reservoir waters to inform the operator of hazards, restricted areas, time-of-day restrictions or other matters concerning safety. The general meaning of these signs is determined by the shape. The rectangle is used for informational signs, the circle indicates restrictions, the diamond denotes danger, and the diamond enclosing a cross means that boats must keep out. The nature of the warning marker is explained by the use of words inside and/or outside the symbol.





Weather

High winds may make boating on some lakes and reservoirs dangerous. Small craft weather advisories (such as shown at right) may be displayed at some locations to inform boaters when weather conditions become dangerous for small boat operation. A lake or reservoir may be closed to boating until conditions improve.




PENNANT: Daytime Signals



LIGHTS: Night Signals

Storm Advisories

NOTE: On some reservoirs, only the red light is used. On others, the display of flags and lights has been discontinued. Boaters should check current weather conditions before getting under way.

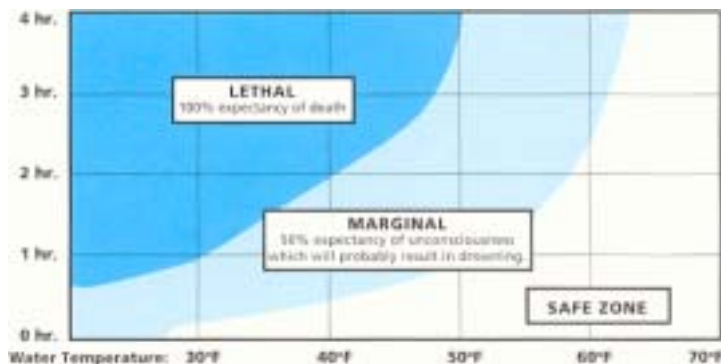
 = Red

Water Temperature

Water in lakes and reservoirs at high elevations is very cold. Sudden immersion in ice-cold water can cause temporary paralysis with resulting helplessness and drowning. For these reasons, wearing of personal flotation devices by all occupants of boats and the wearing of wet suits for water-skiing is recommended while on cold water.

The chart below illustrates the degree of risk of exposure to low water temperature.

Life Expectancy in Water



Based on a
Pan American
Airways Emergency
Procedures
Training Manual
Chart

Courtesy Afloat

Consideration for your fellow recreationist is a common courtesy. Do not assume because you are water-skiing, windsurfing, or trolling that you have the right-of-way. Other courtesy afloat measures include: ■ Be a quiet boater. State boating law sets noise level limits for boats. If your exhaust noise is clearly audible above all other noise, it is probably too loud. ■ Slow down and watch your wake when approaching congested areas or small boats with low transoms. ■ Do not boat or water-ski close to swimming areas. ■ Do not throw refuse overboard.

Special Conditions

Local authorities and boaters familiar with the area can advise you about local conditions, laws and special equipment needed. Prior to using your boat at high altitude it should be checked for its performance at such altitudes. Carburetors, for example, may require adjustment.

Alcohol

Alcohol is a contributing factor to many boating accidents, injuries, and fatalities. Studies show that the hazardous side-effects of alcohol are more pronounced when operating a boat. Alcohol, combined with wind, boat noise, vibration, wave action, and sun-glare has a tremendous adverse influence on your judgment and response time in boating. Do not drink and operate a boat.

BOATING SAFETY CLASSES explaining required and recommended equipment for small boats and offering training in good seamanship are conducted throughout California by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, the U.S. Power Squadrons and certain chapters of the American Red Cross. For information on Coast Guard Auxiliary and Power Squadron classes, call (800) SEA-SKIL (732-7545) or (800) 368-5647. The Department of Boating and Waterways offers a free home study course entitled *California Boating Safety Course*. For more information, e-mail us at pubinfo@dbw.ca.gov, or phone (916) 263-1331 or tollfree (888) 326-2822, or write: Department of Boating and Waterways, 2000 Evergreen Street, Suite 100, Sacramento, California 95815-3888. Visit our Website at www.dbw.ca.gov.